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ABSTRACT

The complete directions for constructing a Penny Theater for public library use are provided. It includes: the dimensions and materials needed, curtains and drops required for scenery, and necessary lights. The entire construction procedure is clearly illustrated. (NH)

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PENNY THEATER
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

DIRECTIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THEATER

The theater sits on four legs. The back, and front proscenuim arch fit over the edge of the base. The wings, which are hinged, cover the legs and enclose the theater when folded. The inner proscenium stands 3" behind the outer, and is held in place by a slot underneath the crossbeams and is removeable. Crossbeam should provide 2 or 3 dowel slots for a curtain and a light rod between the proscenium arches.

Since theater will undoubtedly be carried by crossbeams, the front proscenium may need to be strengthened. We used paneling glued onto plywood, or 5/8" plywood if theater is to be painted. But if theater is to be used in one location at a single library, it may not need to be so strongly constructed.

Orchestra is intended to hide legs, hold footlights and extend stage outward if necessary by bridging the two with a cardboard floor.

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PENNY THEATER

Montgomery County Public Library

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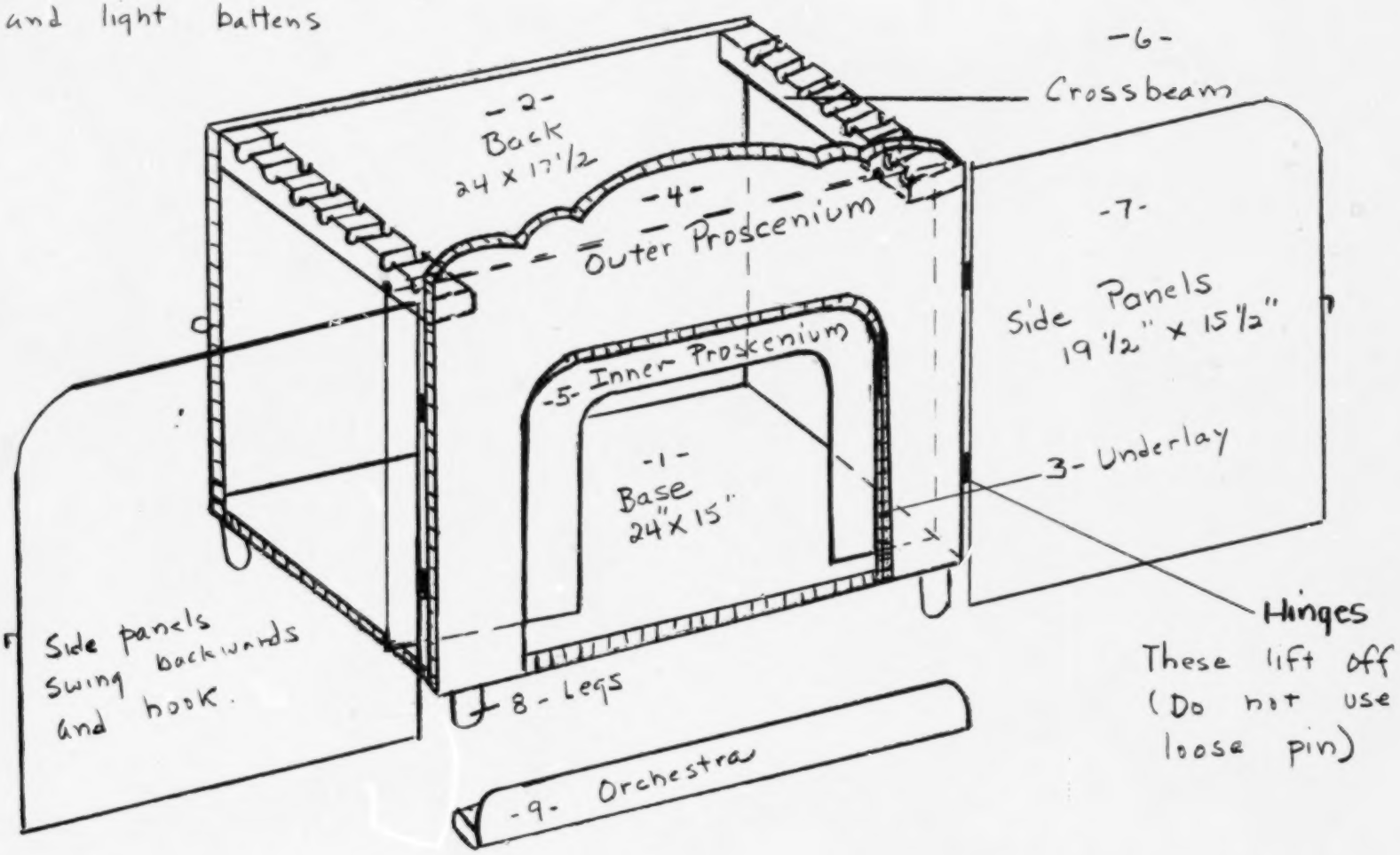
24"

1/2" dowel for scenery and light battens



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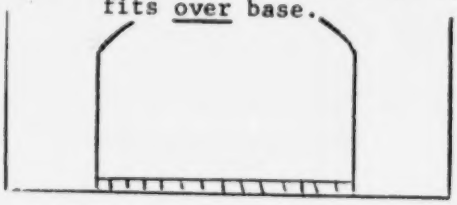
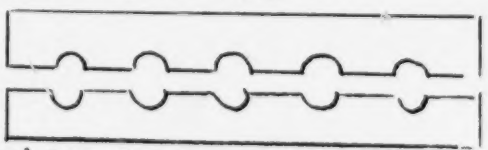
DIMEMSIONS AND MATERIALS

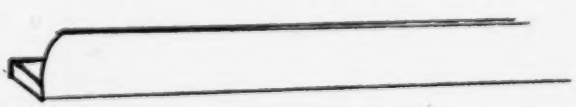
1. Base 24" x 15" ½" - 5/8" Tickness
2. Back 24" x 17½" ¼" - ½" Thickness
3. Front underlay for proscenium arch (optional) 24 x 21½.
4. Outer proscenium arch 24" x 21½" rounded rectangular opening is 19" x 14" fits over base.



5. Inner proscenium arch 24" x 17". Sits on top of base and is held in place by slots in 2 top crossbars. 17" in height may have to be trimmed at top to fit into crossbeams. Rounded rectangular opening is 15" x 12". Inner proscenium slides out when needed.
6. Crossbeams. Drill 9/16" holes in 2 x 4 15" in length. Holes are drilled every ½". 2 x 4 is then cut in half length wise to make a slotted holder for scenery dowels.



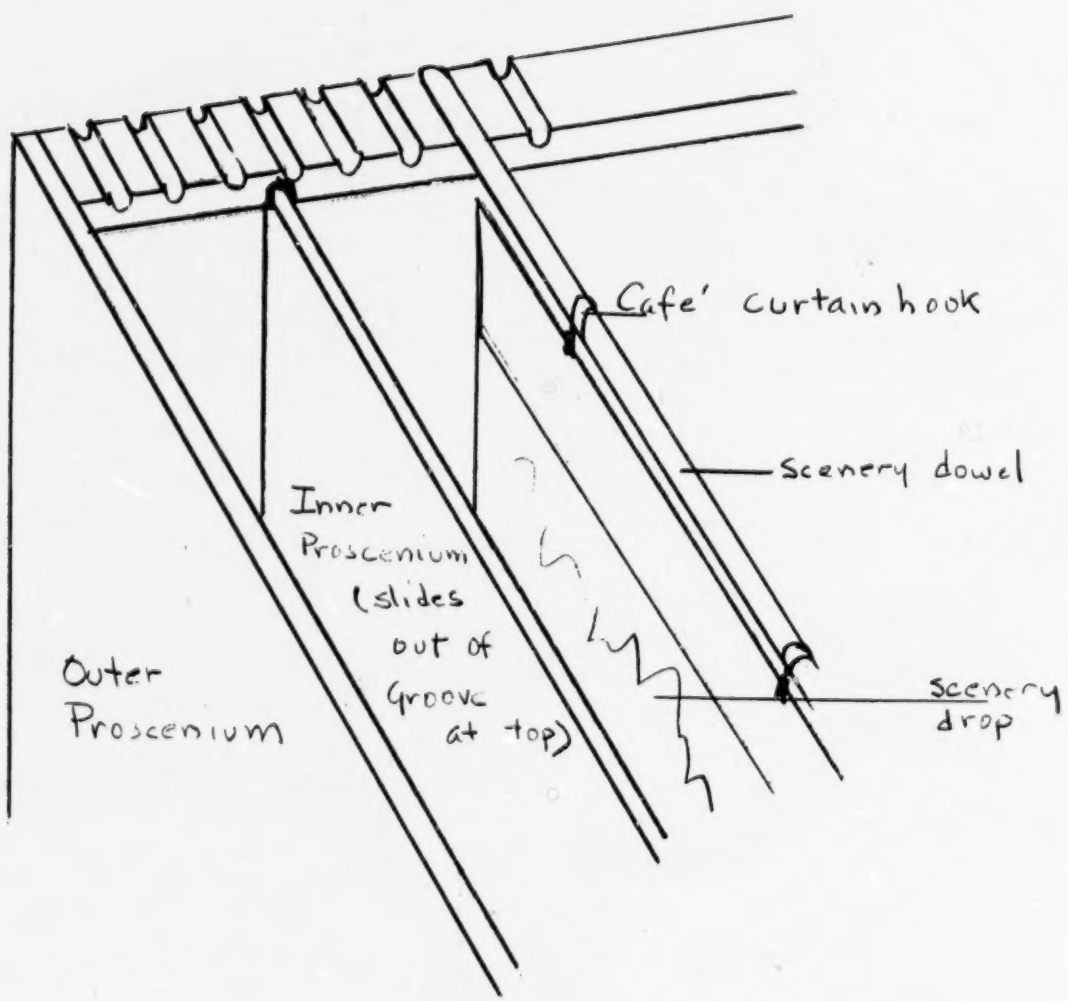
7. Side Panels. 19½ x 15½". These are hinged to outer proscenium with removeable hinges, and the outside upper corner is rounded. They cover the theater legs, and wh4n folded back enclose the theater sides, with hook fastener at back.
8. Legs. 4 - 1½" dowel 2" high.
9. Orchestra - rounded edge strip 24" x 2½" with inside base of 24" x 2" x ½". Footlights are tacked inside. Orchestra should not be taller than stage floor.



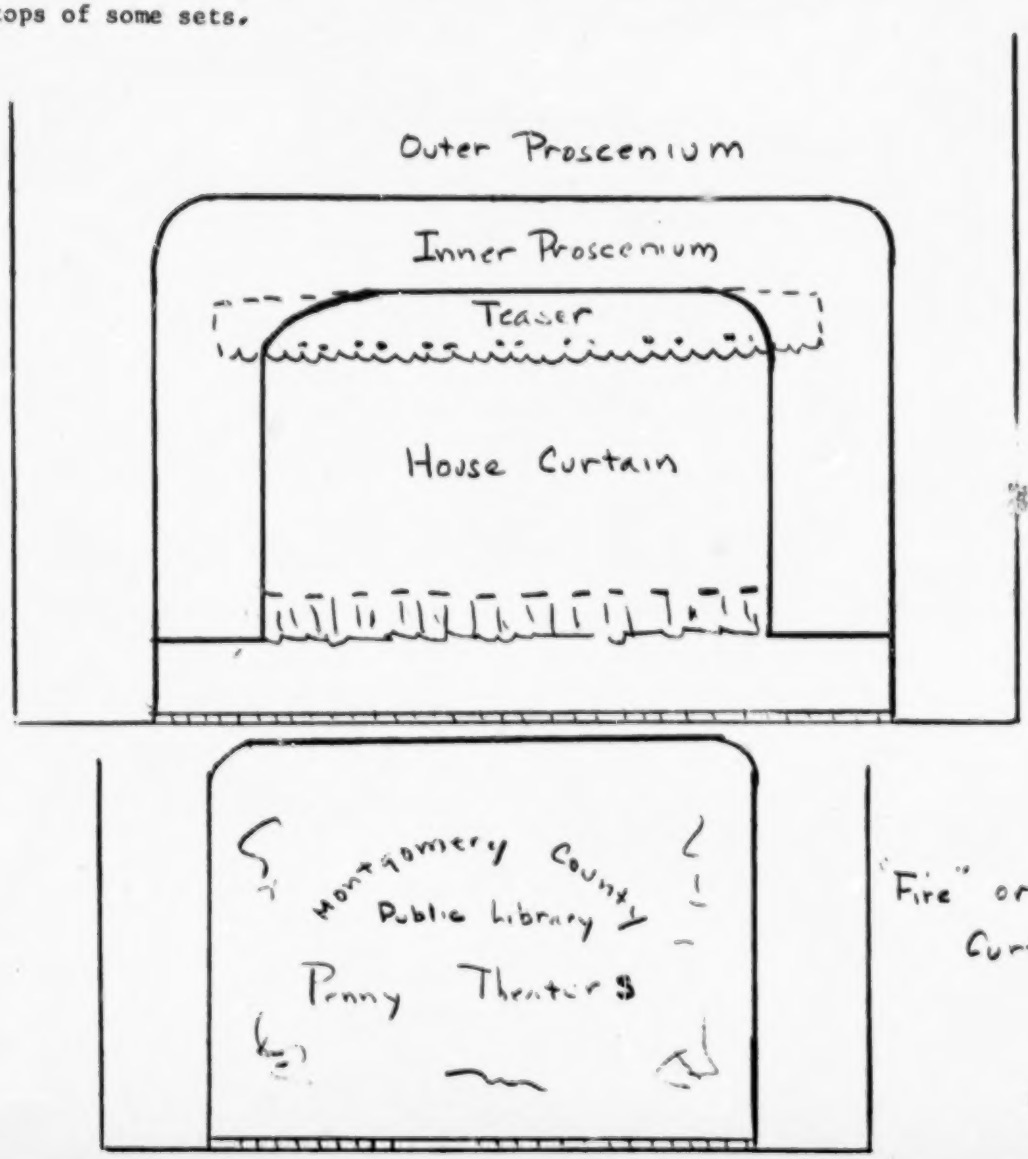
10. 12-15½" dowels 24" long for curtains, lights and scenery.

CURTAINS AND DROPS FOR SCENERY

1. Scenery drops will suspended by curtain hooks onto ½" dowels which are held in place by slots in crossbeams.



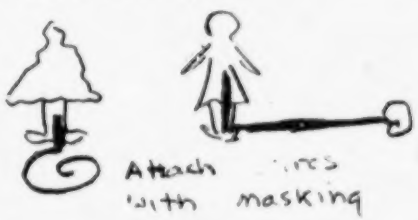
2. We use rigid curtain by pasting cloth on cardboard or on frames so that these can easily be pulled up like the scenery. They hang from dowels also. We have a "canvas" fire curtain (cardboard) advertising the play or library system which drops between the proscenium arches. The house curtain, which is quite elegant, drops behind the second proscenium arch. The teaser may be tacked to the back of the inner proscenium arch, or it may be dropped as a removeable piece, or it may be omitted althogether. Some picture books, however, are not tall enough to fill up the theater space, and some arrangement needs to be made to hide the tops of some sets.

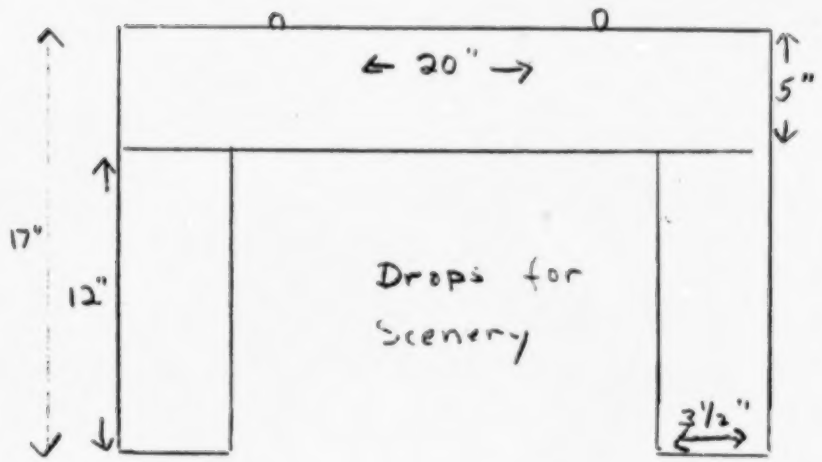


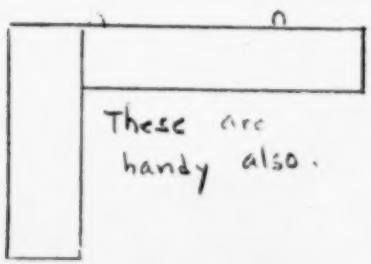
3. Drops of plain grey cardboard or cloth covered board can be used. Most plays need two or three drops in addition to the backdrop. These hang from dowels, and scenery can be attached to them with masking tape or each play may be constructed with its own scenery sets and drops.

4. Drops hang from the dowels with pinch cafe curtain hooks. For a ½" dowel, you need ½" hooks, otherwise they slide up and down on the rods.

5. We use clothes hangers for the character wires. The ends of these can be bent so that they support a character upright. We also use them for supports for free - standing pieces of scenery.







LIGHTS

1. Light battens

   Christmas tree lights are best, particularly if you can use sockets from old strings. We think you need 3 or 4 dowels of 8 or more lights. (white, ed, blue, amber). These are wired on dowels. Dowels can be positioned at various spots.

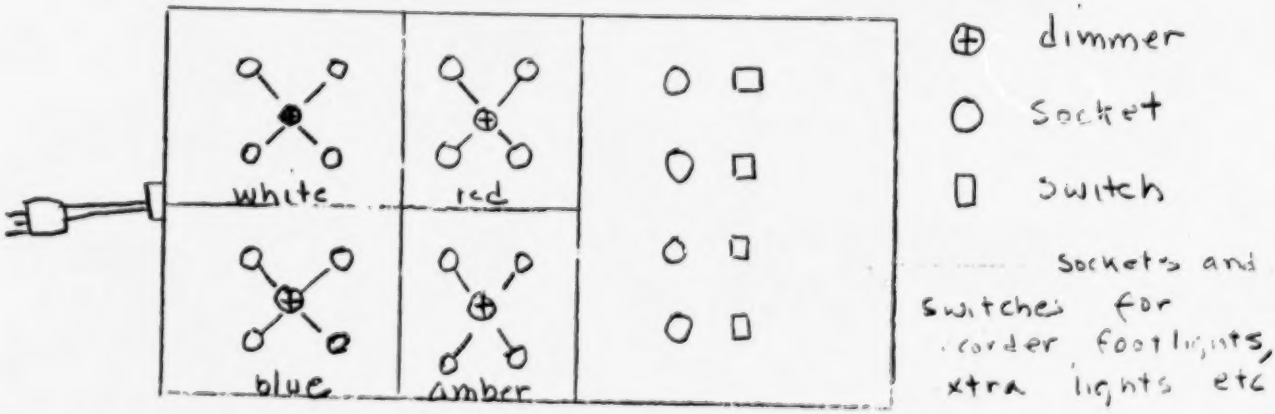
2. Footlights

   Six lights are best for footlights, and are tacked inside orchestra. Footlights work better if they are controlled by a switch and work separately from the dimmer.

3. Light board or box can be screwed to back of theater.

4. Use silent switches.

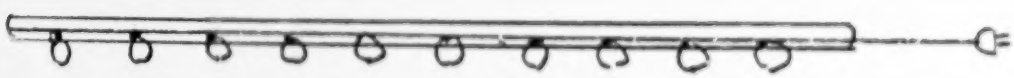
PLAN (A)



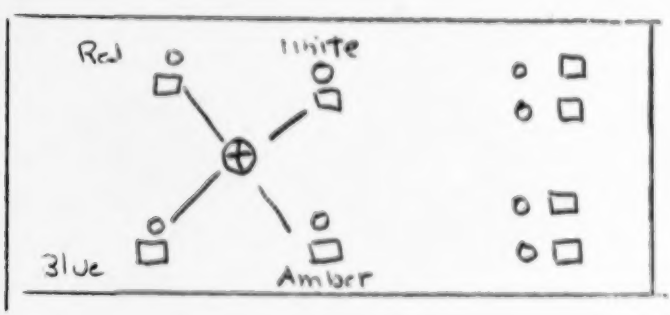
Light Box

PLAN (B) (Adequate for most Theaters)

Use single string for simpler lighting, and put all one color on a single batten. One dimmer dims all lights. Switches allow color control.



All one color



⊕ Dimmer
○ Socket
□ Switch